

## ELDER SPENCER W. KIMBALL

*Of The Council of the Twelve Apostles*

My beloved brethren, this is the great day of my life. I have seen hands raised many times in my life, but never have they meant quite so much as they meant today when you raised your hands to sustain and support me.

## EXPERIENCES RELATING TO CALL AS AN APOSTLE

I feel extremely humble in this calling that has come to me. Many people have asked me if I was surprised when it came. That, of course, is a very weak word for this experience. I was completely bewildered and shocked. I did have a premonition that this call was coming, but very brief, however. On the eighth of July, when President Clark called me I was electrified with a strong presentiment that something of this kind was going to happen. As I came home at noon, my boy was answering the telephone and he said, "Daddy, Salt Lake City is calling."

I had had many calls from Salt Lake City. They hadn't ever worried me like this one. I knew that I had no unfinished business in Salt Lake City, and the thought came over me quickly, "You're going to be called to an important position." Then I hurriedly swept it from my mind, because it seemed so unworthy and so presumptuous, and I had convinced myself that such a thing was impossible by the time that I heard President Clark's voice a thousand miles away saying: "Spencer, this is Brother Clark speaking. The brethren have just called you to fill one of the vacancies in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles."

Like a bolt of lightning it came. I did a great deal of thinking in the brief moments that I was on the wire. There were quite a number of things said about disposing of my business, moving to headquarters, and other things to be expected of me. I couldn't repeat them all, my mind seemed to be traveling many paths all at once—I was dazed, almost numb with the shock; a picture of my life spread out before me. It seemed that I could see all of the people before me whom I had injured, or who had fancied that I had injured them, or to whom I had given offense, and all the small petty things of my life. I sensed immediately my inability and limitations and I cried back, "Not me, Brother Clark! You can't mean that!" I was virtually speechless. My heart pounded fiercely.

I recall two or three years ago, when Brother Lee was giving his maiden address as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ from this stand, he told us of his experience through the night after he had been notified of his call. I think I now know something about the experience he had. I have been going through it for twelve weeks. I believe the brethren were very kind to me in announcing my appointment when they did so that I might make the necessary adjustments in my business affairs, but perhaps they were more inspired to give me the time that I needed of a long period of purification, for in those long days and weeks I did a great deal of thinking and praying, and fasting and praying. There were conflicting thoughts that surged through my mind—seeming voices saying:

"You can't do the work. You are not worthy. You have not the ability"—and always finally came the triumphant thought: "You must do the work assigned—you must make yourself able, worthy and qualified." And the battle raged on.

I remember reading that Jacob wrestled all night, "until the breaking of the day," for a blessing; and I want to tell you that for eighty-five nights I have gone through that experience, wrestling for a blessing. Eighty-five times, the breaking of the day has found me on my knees praying to the Lord to help me and strengthen me and make me equal to this great responsibility that has come to me. I have not sought positions nor have I been ambitious. Promotions have continued to come faster than I felt I was prepared for them.

#### BLESSINGS RECEIVED FROM OBEYING A FORMER CALL

I remember when I was called to be a counselor in the stake presidency. I was in my twenties. President Grant came down to help to bury my father, who was the former stake president, and reorganize the stake. I was the stake clerk. I recall that some of my relatives came to President Grant, unknown to me, after I had been chosen, and said, "President Grant, it's a mistake to call a young man like that to a position of responsibility and make an old man of him and tie him down." Finally, after some discussion, President Grant said very calmly, but firmly, "Well, Spencer has been called to this work, and he can do as he pleases about it," and, of course, when the call came, I accepted it gladly, and I have received great blessings therefrom.

A few days ago one of my well-to-do clients came to me and said, "Spencer, you're going away from us?"

"Yes," I said.

"Well, this is going to ruin you financially," he continued. "You are just getting started well; your business is prospering. You are making a lot of money now and the future looks bright yet. I don't know how you can do this. You don't have to accept the call, do you?"

And I said, "Brother, we do not have to accept any call, but if you understand the Mormon way of life, those of us who have been reared in the Church and understand the discipline of the Church, we just always do accept such calls." And I further said to him: "Do you remember what Luke said, ' . . . for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth' (Luke 12:15), and all the bonds, lands, houses, and livestock are just *things* that mean so little in a person's abundant life."

#### PREDICTIONS MADE IN PATRIARCHAL BLESSINGS

It is strange how many things can go through one's mind in such a very short period when he is under strain and stress. I have heard of how people, when they were drowning, could see everything that had ever happened to them—especially the errors of their lives—and I have gone through that experience many times during these eighty-five endless days of emotional stress. Each dawn I seemed to expect this—which

seemed such an impossible dream—to dissipate into vague nothingness, as my other dreams have, but reassurance came that it was real.

There are a few things that came to my attention recently which strengthen me and in which you might be interested—particularly with reference to two patriarchal blessings and one prediction or prophecy made by my father. This was made known to me only a week ago. In preface to the first of his statements I will read a line or two from his patriarchal blessing given to him by Patriarch John Smith back in 1898. He said to my father: “Andrew Kimball, . . . thou shalt have the spirit of discernment to foretell future events and thy name shall be handed down with thy posterity in honorable remembrance from generation to generation.” And then Brother Hatch, another patriarch said: “. . . for thou art a prophet and came upon earth in this dispensation to be a great leader.”

#### A FATHER'S PROPHECY

Just the other day one of my brethren came into the office to talk to me intimately and confidently. After closing the door, he said, “Spencer, your father was a prophet. He made a prediction that has literally come to pass, and I want to tell you about it.” He continued, “Your father talked with me at the corral, one evening. I had brought a load of pumpkins for his pigs. You were just a little boy and you were sitting there, milking the cows, and singing to them as you milked. Your father turned to me and said, ‘Brother, that boy, Spencer, is an exceptional boy. He always tries to mind me, whatever I ask him to do. I have dedicated him to be one of the mouthpieces of the Lord—the Lord willing. You will see him some day as a great leader. I have dedicated him to the service of God, and he will become a mighty man in the Church.’”

I say this, not in the sense of boasting, but in humility and appreciation. It came to me as a great surprise when first I heard of it the other day. I knew my father was prophetic, and some day I hope to be able to tell you some of his many prophecies which have been literally fulfilled.

#### PROMISE MADE TO MOTHER

And then when I was clearing out the files, getting ready to move up to Salt Lake, I came across my mother's patriarchal blessing, given to her by Brother James M. Works when she was a young woman of twenty-four years. She had only one child—and when you remember that this one child passed away and none of her other ten children were born at this time, this prophecy will seem all the more remarkable to you. The patriarch said, among other things, “Sister Olive Woolley, . . . thou shalt be numbered among the mothers in Israel and shall raise up a numerous posterity to the joy of thy husband. They shall grow up to become mighty men and women in the Church and Kingdom of God. Thy sons shall be stars of the first magnitude in thy crown and shall be healthy, strong, and vigorous in helping to direct the purposes of God in this last dispensation.”

I have read this many times in my life, but I had never noticed before: "Thy sons shall be stars of the first magnitude." And again, it humbles me exceedingly. I feel that the Lord in calling me to this work has fulfilled the promise of His servant.

#### COMFORT FOUND IN SCRIPTURES

In these long weeks since July eighth, I can tell you that I have been overwhelmed and have felt that I was unable to carry on this great work; that I was unworthy; that I was incapable because of my weaknesses and my limitations. I have felt many times that I was up against a blank wall. And in that interim I have been out in the desert and in high mountains alone, apart, and have poured out my soul to God. I have taken courage from one or two scriptures which constantly came to my mind and of which people continued to remind me. One was from Paul and as I felt so foolish, small, and weak, I remembered that he said: "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise: and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; . . . that no flesh should glory in his presence." (I Corinthians 1:25-29.)

When my feeling of incompetence wholly overwhelmed me, I remembered the words of Nephi when he said: ". . . I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them." (I Nephi 3:7.) I want to tell you that I lean heavily on these promises, that the Lord will strengthen and give me growth and fit and qualify me for this great work. I have seen the Lord qualify men. In my Church experience I have helped to make many bishops. I have seen them grow and prosper and become great and mighty men in the Church; men who were weak and men who were foolish, and they became strong and confounded the wise, and so I rely upon that promise of the Lord that he will strengthen and empower me that I may be able to do this work to which I have been called.

As I read the scriptures about the Apostles of old, I found them starting out in their ministry with much less strength and they increased in might and power. I found Paul saying toward the end of his career: "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation." (Romans 1:16.) And though Peter had had many experiences with perhaps some doubts, and misgivings, and he had not always shown the strength of his later years, but after the resurrection of Christ, when asked by Him who He was, Peter, testified, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16.)

#### APPRECIATION EXPRESSED

I appreciate deeply the unparalleled honor that has come to me. I

shall do my utmost to show my appreciation to my Lord and my brethren by being a faithful servant. I am grateful for the opportunity of working with these honored and great men of the Authorities toward whom I have always had almost a worshipful devotion. I glory in the opportunity to serve the people of this Church, to share their disappointments and sorrows, and their joys and achievements.

I know that this is the Church and Kingdom of God. It has been a part of me. Whenever it has prospered I have gloried in it. When it was criticized, it has hurt me, for it seemed a part of my very being. Every fibre in my body bears witness that this is the Gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness. I testify to you that this is the work of God, that Jesus is the Christ, our Redeemer, our Master, our Lord, and I bear testimony to you in all sincerity and in deepest humility, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

*President McKay:* Elder Ezra T. Benson, whom you have sustained this day as the junior member of the Council of the Twelve, will now speak to you.

### ELDER EZRA T. BENSON

#### *Of The Council of the Twelve Apostles*

My beloved brethren of the Priesthood, my heart is filled to overflowing with gratitude as I look into your faces this day—a day which I shall never forget.

I am grateful beyond my power of expression for the blessings which have come to me, and particularly for this great honor that has come to one of the weakest of your number. I love this work. All my life I have had a testimony of it and a love for the leaders of the Church and for the Priesthood of God. I know that it is true and no sacrifice is too great for this wonderful work in which we are engaged.

#### CALL CAME AS SURPRISE

My brethren, I must confess I had no premonition of this call, even of the shortest duration. When passing through Salt Lake and stopping over here, just between trains, enroute to Colorado on the 26th of July, President McKay indicated that the President of the Church wanted to see me a few moments. Even then such a thought as of being called to this high and holy calling never entered my mind. It was only a few minutes later that President Grant took my right hand in both of his and looked into the depths of my very soul and said: "Brother Benson, with all my heart I congratulate you and pray God's blessings to attend you; you have been chosen as the youngest Apostle of the Church."

The whole world seemed to sink. I could hardly believe it was true, that such a thing could happen, and it has been difficult since for me to realize that it is a reality.